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Measure

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Eric Schneider
Richard H. Shafer II
Don Shanahan
Gayle Smith
Bob Spychalski
Megan Taylor

Measure

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Literary Works by

Angie Gibbs

Kindergarten

Angie Gibbs

Today I drew a picture
I only had three crayons,
Red, green, and black.
My bumblebee was not
Yellow and black as
Most of them are.
It was green and red,
Like a stocking
Hung by the chimney with care.
My picture had a flower,
It was normal as can be.
It was red with a green stem.
Oh! The poor bumblebee.
The children all laughed,
As I hung it on the wall.
A bee is black and yellow,
Don't you know?
A red and green bee,
You must be crazy!
But the flower is perfect,
I cried in reply.
It looks like yours and yours
And yours, I plead.
But what an ugly bug they said.
Oh! The poor bumblebee.

Cut the Chain

Angie Gibbs

The phone rings,
I do not relent to the noise.
I have that feeling it brings,
Like the searing touch of Old Man Winter.
"There was an accident,"
Nothing else was spoken.
I flee to their side,
I sit with them,
Nothing would ever be the same.
I hold on to them,
I squeeze their hands,
I'm beginning to doubt.
And I wait,
Wait for an eternity.
Searching for a way out, out.
They rush in and out.
Doctors, Priests, relatives,
The inercom is screeching.
They're searching our eyes,
For something, anything.
They cannot find the words.
I stare,
My eyes falling on no one.
Nothing will allow the pain to escape.
Gone, Gone, Gone, Gone.

Uphill and Down

Angie Gibbs

Why

Does love

Feel like an emotional

Roller coaster? Why does

It go up in a brilliant sweep off my

Feet, then come down again like a skydiver

With a broken parachute trying to stay alive?

Literary Works by

Amy Black

Autumn Ball

Amy Black

There is a ball outside!
As the leaves blow side to side.
Red, orange, yellow, and brown
As they blow around and round.
They curtsy and sway
As the wind cries out hurry.
The skeleton trees
Dance in the breeze.
For there is a ball outside!
And we have been cordially invited.
So do not delay
For it is becoming time
For the close of the day.

The Walk

Amy Black

To take a walk
Down memory lane
May leave you with
Too much pain;
However, I am here
To lend an ear.
So let us begin the walk
So, you can talk
And I can hear.

Reality

Amy Black

To see you with her makes me ponder.
When you gave her your love it makes me wonder.
What would it be like to take her place?
To feel your love, your passion, your grace.
But I know that it could never be,
For I must face reality.

Mother

Jamie Riberto

Mother, creator of being,
Teacher of life's lessons,
Image to follow, critic of wrong actions,
Listener to dreams, singer of success,
Counselor of problems,
Cheerleader of happiness, healer of sadness,
Believer in life,
Friend forever.

New Kid on the Playground

Jamie Riberto

I watched on the playground as the little girl cried in
despair.

How could those kids be so mean and unfair?

Her blonde pigtails shook as she sobbed.

Her fair face was blotted red and stained with tears.

She sat alone on the curb in her red checkered dress
as the other kids played about in happiness.

I had watched them push her off the swing and her start
to cry.

Couldn't they just wait their turn?

She looked all alone on the curb as she cried.

She sat by herself and looked in need of a friend.

I decided I had to approach her.

I knew and felt her pain.

I was once that sad girl in distress.

I had experienced times of sadness,
times when I was bullied by others
and sat on the curb alone in tears.

I walked up to her and held out my hand.

She looked up and smiled her toothless grin and knew
that I understand the loneliness she knew.

I knew the feelings of being all alone.

I knew the feeling of being the girl on the playground
that was new.

Megan's Prayer

Megan Taylor

Lord,

Let me see you wherever I go
To trust you completely despite what I know
To put others first, second only to You
To know when to quit and when to pursue

To respect other's faults, problems and traits
To love them as You have and banish all hate
To remember I'm human and prone to do wrong
But You will forgive me and help me along

To use my anger for something that's good
To be wise, sensitive and do what I should
To never take sides or be cruel in my words
To listen in earnest, not push to be heard

To shine like the sun on a gray, stormy day
To chase people's sorrow and fears far away
To delight in the small things that money can't buy
To be strong in morals but gentle and kind

To be humble and serve and answer your call
To freely and cheerfully give of my all
To love You and follow in simple and hard
To accept all You offer with joy in my heart.

Help me let go and surrender my life
And not worry, despair or be tackled by strife.
Remind me there's nothing that I cannot do
Holding Your hand and clinging to You.

Summit

Richard H. Shafer II

Though today is
filled with
uncertainty and
fear and the road
is filled with holes, boulders; I will still trek
on the path to the summit. For it will be upon
the summit I will see and remember the
mountains of my past. And knowing that
one day even
the greatest
mountain will be
brought down to
but a very fine
sand I can say
with conviction
that this fray I
face today will be
but a grain of
s a n d
intertwined
among millions
one day.

11 Web

Eric Schneider

I wish I could be closer,
Not so many miles away.
When we sit down and talk
You remind me of yesterday.
Things were simple for me
And the opposite for you.
A kid, three jobs or so
You did what it took to get through
Everything has changed.
You, one of the only constants in my life,
Never changed, just as I remembered it, when life was
pure and right.
Sugar wafers and Jolly Ranchers
And Pepsi glass bottles,
Little chewed up man.
I can't get the Snapdragon to snap;
Where did Grandma Schneider go?
Play with the hood for awhile.
There's the pledge and Toy on the wall
Steep stairs to walk down
Have to stay in uniform until Dad comes
Hot sun glaring in my eye
Little books with no pages or words
Don't Tread on Me
Little knickknacks that can't last forever
I was innocent then, now I know more than I want
And when you lost your best friend
I know what you went through
No one was there when it happened to me
I hope I was good enough for you
Just a strong little German woman
With a heart of gold and a voice to match
So many moments and stories in your life

A Different Sun

Mike Nichols

Vanish the world with
The curtains of your eyes
And obscure the windows of your dreams.
Sleep swiftly beneath the lion's dripping jaws.
Pray you're not preyed upon.
Pray you're not preyed upon.

You and I --
We burn a different sun.
We chase the hungry dark
With candles all our own,
Needing no matches,
No heat,
No fickle spark,
No distant star
To kindle our light.

Let's conquer the world
With open eyes
And ignite the blinds of our dreams.
Be awake for the lunge of the lion
And pray for those who are preyed upon.
And pray for those who are preyed upon.

It is. It isn't.

Mike Nichols

Ever think the universe is crazy
And we're all just delusions,
Figments of imagination?
My mind is frozen in this quandary.
There are problems in all solutions;
Each creates a simple complication.

I see a mass of darting heads,
Blurry legs, vapor trails, clicking heels
And tired arms carrying sweaty palms.
I don't want to save seconds and lose my life,
The feeling of how it feels,
Or end up swatting flies with nuclear bombs.

Ever think everything is going wrong?

I put Reason on the operating table,
And it started to die.
It needed a transfusion
From something I could not name.
Why must everything be broken down?
How many parts are there to the sky?
Too much order is confusion,
Or are they really both the same?

Ever think everything is wrong?
Every dream you were dreaming all along
And nothing is as it seems?
If it is, it isn't
And if it isn't, it is.

Love and Pain

B. Joseph

I can feel you in my arms,
But you aren't there.
I can feel my lips against yours,
But you aren't there.

Every spot on my body feels you,
Even my heart and soul.
I want so badly to hold you again.
But something is between you and me.

I can see you standing there,
Waiting for me to reach out to you.
But I can't move,
But my whole body is trying.

My heart is pounding.
My hands are sweating.
I remember the feeling I used to have,
But it feels so long ago.

My body is feeling that again,
But my mind is saying wait.
I can't go forward,
You must reach to me.

And I pray that you will,
I remember now the times you couldn't.
You were too scared,
But your fear scarred me.

...continued

Love and Pain

...continued

But you must reach for me,
If you don't we may never be.
I want to call out to you,
But I can't speak.

You must act.
I feel my whole body shaking,
I fear you will turn away,
To hide your pain.

I watch, I wait to see if you move,
As you slowly turn your back.
My body explodes in pain.
Again I try to call to you.

Nothing.
Then you turn, sensing my passion,
With tears flowing down your cheeks,
You reach for me.

Your hands rest on my waist,
And I can move freely,
As I wrap my arms around you,
My lips kiss yours.

My whole body is crying for joy,
I am not sure if the feelings will last,
But my body doesn't care.
It will risk the pain.

Literary Works by

Chrissy Scafide

Selfish

*Chrissy Scafide
for Joe*

wanting fairytales
dreaming dreams
I'm selfish more each day
it seems

everything perfect
never ending bliss
lately it's been
my only wish

imagining days
free of pain
sure of myself
no more games

looking beyond
the truth of
what's really there
the silent love

passing by
opportunity
waiting for a fantasy

stupidity

Motherly Advice

Chrissy Scafide

"It'll happen some day."
(That's what you always say.)

"You're a beautiful girl."
(No one sees me that way.)

"Just be patient, you'll see."
(Easy for you, you're not me.)

"Keep your head up and smile."
(Smiles only last a short while.)

"You can make yourself happy."
(I've been trying for so long.)

"Anything I can do?"
(Everything's going wrong!)

"I was once in your shoes and I know it's not fun. To be all by yourself wishing you had someone. But it happened to me and for you it will too. When you least are expecting it will happen to you. You'll look back on today with a reassuring smile, because your loneliness lasted only for a short while. Right now seems like there's not much you can do, but I'll always be here and I'll help you get through. So please, dry your tears, I hate to see you cry. And remember I'll always love you for what's inside."

(Thanks, Mom.)

Eager

Chrissy Scafide

I am eager for you to approach me with your confident hands and awkward walk and reassuring grin. My heart smiles at the possibilities. I nervously wait and dream of you...

I am eager to feel your sweet touch and to dance close with you to nothing but the rhythm of our own heartbeats. My stomach tingles at the thought of it. I wait restlessly and imagine us...

Are you eager to approach me and familiarize yourself with my frail body and wandering mind? Will you notice my trembling body and shaking knees and smiling heart? Will you wait nervously and dream of me?

Are you eager to dance with me and to melt into a moment of unfamiliar rapture? Will you notice my tingling stomach? Will you wait restlessly and imagine us?

I am eager for the simple acknowledgement of my existence.

Are you eager?

The Front Lawn

Chrissy Scafide

Often exist sleepless nights filled with sighs of regret,
and routine tosses and turns.
Ceaseless endeavors to shake the past.

Beams of moonlight ritually emerge through my
bedroom window; subtle summons to safety.
I obey like a soldier.

Up out of bed and out the front door,
a lush blanket of security awaits.
I lie supine and gaze into the atmosphere.

Former connections of body and soul unfold,
into a fresh understanding of serenity.
I relish in my suppression of fear.

Sunday Morning on Half Moon River

Cindy Hutchison

My cheek on the hard packed earth of the riverbank
Eyes closed to block out the water that seems too clean for me.
Across the way I imagine what might be watching
I can't stand to see the chill in their eyes-
Or wonder what they think of me.

I am alone.

Eyes open now. I see the willow tree on the opposite shore
It scolds me for not growing up and out, like him.

"Hypocrite!" I scream, "Who are you to judge?

If you're so great, why do your branches droop?

Just what do you hide in the shadows of your limbs?"

I roll over on my back to face the sun.

My clothes are on, but I might as well be naked in this light.

The harshest of my critics leaves me burned and withered
As I am now, the sun might be the last to pass judgement on me.

But I am not burned by him in the heat of the day.

Recalling the past, I've never turned red, only golden.

I use this to re-evaluate my worth.

The water's not too good for me after all--

I strip down and go for a swim.

Longing

Cindy Hutchison

Look at me.
See the fire of my eyes,
The shine of my hair,
The red of my lips,
The curve of my legs,
The cream of my skin;
This attire I don for you.
Look at me.
Look at me until it hurts.

Close your eyes.
Feel the shock of my presences,
The warmth of my breath,
The air in your lungs,
The wind in your face,
The goose flesh on your neck,
The spray of the sea;
My holy land I offer you.
Close your eyes,
Shut out light until you see.

Open your heart.
Hear the pounding in my chest --
It's the roar of a tide,
The silence of our conversation,
The whisper of the breeze,
The voice of my desire,
The words I cannot say;
This love I throw at you.
Open your heart,
Leave room inside, enough for me.

County Fair

Gayle Smith

For one magical night
we fly we soar we can see forever.

For one magical night
we walk as celebrities beneath the lights.

For one magical night
wealthy we are with a pocket stuffed with orange tickets,
our fists with the remainders of a paycheck and our
armpit with a very large purple dog.

For one magical night
the air is tender the sky is a paint chip shade of violet.
The upstaged moon gallantly glows, but is gracious to
the scene below.

For one magical night
we feast on ambrosia in various greasy forms and our
attention is zealously sought by strangers lining our royal
way.

For one magical night
we mingle we bump we jostle we eyeball all with a rare
and comfortable ease
-- for here we are all ageless, raceless, classless--

For one magical night.

From the House by the River
A Tavern's Lullaby

Gayle Smith

Crystal cacophony
rolling, clinking, tumbling,
Doomed for the dumpster, its see-through colors
Sparkling like treasure by parking lot light.

Crystal cacophony,
I hear it through my yawning summer window,
Lying her awake in these soul searching, self-scouring
Wee and waning hours of the dew cloaked night.

Crystal cacophony,
still pungent from the precious amber drops
That somehow got away, deafening the blinking, weary
barkeep,
His work almost finished for this starlit portion of the
day.

Crystal cacophony,
some might say it is an anthem
For a human plague or blight,
But for me it is a sweet and comforting lullaby
For now I know there are others besides the carefree
crickets
Still awake with me in this dark, uncertain world
tonight.

Take Action

Marty Corley
Class of '98

Here we are faced with problems.
Solutions are needed at once.
We must think in the present about the future.
More concentration on prevention than reaction.
Build all that is positive and tear down what is negative.
Cherish the old and guide the young.

Sounds good on paper, but is it a reality?

Think hard
Think long
Think deep

We have the answer, now we need the action.

What Might Be

Dawn Henderson

Moments passed,
hope they don't escape me,
because I know you'll never really feel me.

Don't forget,
try not to regret.
I'm here.
Full of moments,
reminding you of what might be.

Literary Works by

Lisa Phillips

Class Rings

Lisa Phillips

The rings sat in a little velvet box on her dresser, and every so often, she would take them out, eyes gleaming, and look at them. Sometimes she would sigh, for her days of collecting them were over, and she wished, some days, to have that youthful pride once more. This day she sat on the foot of the bed, looking through the rings and trying to remember where each came from. So intent was she, that she did not notice when he came in, she only heard the noise he made as he saw what she was doing.

"Where did you get all of those?" he asked, his eyebrows furrowed.

"They were given to me," she answered, looking up to him from where she sat and smiling. "I was once a very popular girl, you know. Lots of men gave me their class rings."

"Men gave you all these rings?!?" his voice grew a bit too loud. "Why didn't you give them back?"

"I earned them, they're mine." She put them back in the jewelry box, lined in crushed velvet, closed the lid and looked at him carefully.

"Did they ask for them back?"

"Of course they did," she smiled proudly, "but I wouldn't give them back."

"There must be thirty there; what, did you collect them?!?" he asked, his face growing red.

"My best friend Amy and I had a contest going, to see who could collect the most," she told him, her eyes sparkling, "I won."

"Don't you think that's kind of mean?" He took the box from her and opened it.

"Oh don't tell me that dating isn't a competitive sport for men as well as women. It made things more interesting, and I had a lot of fun." She stopped, but he remained silent, growing pale.

...continued

Class Rings

...continued

"My God." He set the box down hard on the dresser, looked at her with sad and sick eyes, and left the room.

Confused and bewildered, she looked first at the bedroom doorway and then at the box. Tears filled her eyes, obscuring the sight of the ring that lay among the others--the one with his initials on it.

Candle Light Goddess

Lisa Phillips

The candle light casts
Shadows on my body.
I am all curvy lines,
All elegance and confidence.
I am mysterious.

In the mirror
A thousand women
Fill my face.
Their stories
pour from me
like from a milk-filled
Silken breast.
I am wise.
I am beautiful.
I am eternal.

Christmas with Dad

Lisa Phillips

"I want to play with my Pretty Pony Paradise Estate!" I try not to stamp my foot. Dad doesn't like it when I stamp my feet.

"I said no, now go to bed!" he yells. He's so mean sometimes. He looks like a giant, or an ogre from one of the story books. One of those slimy yucky ones that tries to eat the three billy goats gruff. His eyebrows make a big V. I wonder how he does that. I don't want my eyebrows to EVER look like that, it's scary. He's watching TV and won't even look at me. You'd think it was Scooby Doo or somethin', the way he stares, but it's just some crummy old movie with girls in bathing suits.

"You promised when we were at Grandma's that I could play when we got home!" I am mad. He promised; he really did. Tears are rolling down my face, and I keep from licking them off the corners of my mouth 'cause that makes me giggle and I don't want to be happy. I want to make him change his mind. I want to play with Meagan and Sundancer.

"I changed my mind, now damn it, Lisa, go to bed!" he looks at me. Uh oh. Maybe I better go to bed. But he promised. Mommy always says that you should keep your promises, and I want to see if my ponies will like their new home.

The light of the TV is reflecting off of the front of his head. I wonder if he knows how stupid he looks. He's getting all red in the face at me. All I want to do is play, not watch his stupid movie, or even talk to him. He's mean.

"You're not s'posed to yell. Mommy says no yelling on Christmas day!" I step closer to him. Maybe he'll remember that I'm his little girl, and maybe he'll hug me real big, and turn off the TV. He's smelly. I think it's his hair. Mommy keeps telling him not to use that grease. I think

...continued

Christmas with Dad

...continued

that's why all his hair runs away; it doesn't like the smell. It makes his hair so stiff that I bet my brother could use it as a ramp for his hot wheels.

"Christmas is over. Go to bed." He sounds like the dog when I grab its tail, or the Grinch that stole Christmas. Better not tell him that; he'll get mad. I wonder if I could find a little screen so I could see his heart. Is it three sizes too small?!?

"It's still Christmas 'til the little hand touches the twelve, and it's not even at the eight! There's a bizillion hours left of Christmas!" Meanie. Can't even have fun on Christmas.

"Shut up and go to bed." He stands up. Maybe a couple steps back wouldn't hurt. Oops, I bumped into the TV. "Hey, watch it! Go to bed NOW, or I'll spank you!"

"But Mommy and Bubby aren't back from testing his new bike yet. I want to kiss them good night." Maybe if I wait long enough he'll give in. I REALLY want to play some more. Besides, Mommy wouldn't have put all the stickers on it if she didn't want me to play with it tonight!

"TO BED!" He hollers. He didn't have to yell like that. I would've gone. I'm crying. Oh no. He's coming toward me.

"Ouch, let go!" He has a hold of my arm. I didn't do anything. What is he muttering? I can't understand him.

"Damn little... I'll teach you not to do as you're told!" Oh no, here it comes. He's pushing me over his knee. His bone cuts into my stomach. The sound of the belt sliding out of its loops makes me freeze.

"MOMMY!" I scream, "Daddy, please don't. I'll be good, I'll be good. I'll go to bed!"

"You've got to learn some manners little girl, and I'm gonna teach 'em to you!" Is he really laughing? The

...continued

Christmas with Dad

...continued

first hit is not very hard, but the belt doesn't just hit my bottom, where he means for it to. With each hit, he's hitting my sides, and then my lower legs, and now my back. I try to get away, but it only makes the belt hit worse places. He'll stop if I scream enough. He doesn't know how much he's hurting me. It doesn't work. I've lost count of how many it was. On Christmas. Who spansks a kid on Christmas? Mommy wouldn't spank me on Christmas. She didn't last year when I tried to glue angel hair on the dog.

"Mommy's gonna get you. She's gonna spank you for being mean to me!" Maybe she will, if this spanking ever stops and she ever gets home. Why is he spanking me harder?!? Isn't he afraid of Mommy? It'll be over in a minute.

It's over. He's in the kitchen, pacing. I'm alone. His movie is ending, but he didn't watch the last of it. I hope he doesn't spank me again for making him miss it.

Mommy's home. I can hear her and Bubby laughing as they come up the walk. When she walks in the door, she looks first at me, and then at Dad, "Rick, take your sister to her room and both of you stay there."

"What do we do now? I ask him, as he hurries me into my room.

"We pack," my brother answers, closing the door behind him.

The Flag

Lisa Phillips

Part One

I finished the last stripe on the huge paper flag before me with a great feeling of satisfaction. Tossing the red crayon on to the table, I grabbed the flag and hurried over to my grandfather, who was dozing comfortably in his favorite chair.

"Grandpa, look what I made for you!" I said, climbing into his lap as he woke up and smiled at me.

"Well, what's this?" he asked. He always asked that.

"It's an American flag. Mommy said that you were a soldier for our country and that we should be very proud of you, so I made you a flag," I explained, watching his eyes light up.

"Thank you sweetheart," he said while picking me up, and gently setting me down out of his way. He got up, eyeing the flag carefully, "It's beautiful."

"Whatcha doin', Grandpa?" I asked a few moments later, leaning on the door frame of his room.

"I'm hanging up my flag." He was digging through his tool box. He pulled out a hammer.

"But Grandma says we're out of tape!" I told him, "We'll have to wait til she goes to the store."

"I'm going to nail it to the wall," he told me, looking for the nails.

"Grandma! Grandpa's gonna nail my flag up on his wall!" I yelled so she could hear me.

"What are you doing, Richard?" She called from the living room, "Don't use nails to hang that silly piece of paper on the wall! I'll buy some tape tomorrow."

He took out a clear box of nails, and, putting four of them in his mouth, eyed the wall slowly. "How about there?" he asked, careful not to swallow the nails.

...continued

The Flag

...continued

"Grandpa, maybe you better not hang that up with nails. It'll be there forever if you do that!" I looked at my art work, a brightly colored American flag, with all fifty stars on it, and quite a few too many stripes.

"I want it to be here forever." He took paper flag and hammer in hand. His voice was hushed and quiet, like the voice you use in church.

"Here, Richard. I found some tape; you can use it to put it up if you want." Grandma walked in and tried to give him the tape.

"No. Tape doesn't hold. I want this flag to stay," he told her, putting the flag and first nail in place.

"All this fuss over a stupid drawing," Grandma muttered, leaving the room.

"Grandpa doesn't think it's stupid," I grumbled when she was out of ear shot.

I watched, fascinated by the steady, even motion of the hammer against the nail. The noise filled the room, and I could feel it in my chest.

"You really like the flag I made you, Grandpa?"

"I sure do."

"How come?" I asked.

"Cause you gave it to me," he answered.

I listened for a moment to the pounding. I couldn't think of anything more forever than a hammer and nails. Nails last. They don't come unglued or untaped and they don't get loose like teeth or Barbie doll heads.

"Do you want the flag to stay on the wall FOREVER?!" I asked, eyes wide.

"Yep. Forever and ever," he answered as he drove in the last nail. He stood staring at the flag for a long time, and then he looked at me with tears in his eyes. "It's the best flag I'll ever have."

...continued

The Flag ...continued

Part Two

A year later he was dead. I stood back as far as I could while they lowered the casket into the ground.

"He looked so peaceful, like he was asleep," an old lady I didn't know whispered.

"What's that?" I asked, pointing to the bundle my grandmother held.

"The flag," she answered.

"What flag?" I asked, taking a step toward her.

"Because your granddad was a veteran, the army gives your family a flag," the stranger told me with a sympathetic look on her wrinkled, colorless face.

"Let's go hang it up." I reached for the flag that my Grandma held.

"No," she told me, "We'll put this flag away, for safe keeping."

"I don't want to put it away. I want to hang it up. He hung up my flag," I reminded her.

"This is my flag, not yours," my grandmother cooed.

"Then you should hang it up," I said, tears in my eyes.

"I will not."

When I came back to my Grandmother's that evening, I looked in Grandpa's room. The flag had been ripped from the wall and was nowhere to be seen. Little bits of paper clung to the nails. I felt like everything was dead. I felt empty, alone.

...continued

The Flag ...continued

Part Three

The storm seems to be growing. The thunder brings me out of the past, and I feel the rain on my face. With a flash of lightning I can read his name on the tombstone. The rain beats down on my thick leather coat. I finger the college pin on the collar absently, feeling out of touch with that world. The moon is bright and I wonder to myself for the millionth time why I am standing here in the middle of the night.

"Grandpa," I whisper to the tombstone, "I miss you."

There's a little flag glued to a wooden stick next to his name. I look at it, remembering what he said about the flag I made him.

"Everybody has to love somebody, don't they, Grandpa?" I whisper. I can't even see a difference in the ground any more. It's like he's been swallowed up by the cold, empty earth. Somehow his words aren't what they were. Instead of what he said, I hear what he didn't say, and it echoes in my mind like the thunder, "I love you."

Funeral

Lisa Phillips

The smell slams into me
as if I were a car, careening
out of control into a brick wall:
Roses. Overpoweringly sweet
in the somber surroundings.

A room full of roses
and whispered regrets,
all faced toward an ebony
altar, which holds the one who
no longer smells nor hears.

Death of a Drunk

Lisa Phillips

He passed on very quietly; they say
It must have been his heart.
Honestly, I didn't think to ask;
His death gave such a start.

A drinker, they say he was;
There's evidence it's true.
But he grew those roses;
That was strange for him to do.

Now I see the people
Crowding in to clear him out,
The ones who drove him
To drinking, no doubt.

Soon they're gone and all is quiet.
But those roses live on;
A little piece of him
To live now that he is gone.

I doubt that's what he had in mind
When he grew them with such pride.
But now he is dead and they are here.
They live on, but he has died.

...continued

Death of a Drunk

...continued

He is so quiet over there
With barely a hello
To greet his neighbors with
When they come and go.

Just as he was when he lived.
A quiet little mouse
Living on so sadly
In his little house.

But he grew those roses.
So beautiful they are
That they gave a gray old night
One bright and shining star.

They sweetly call his memory
As none will ever do,
And as I hear its mystery
It makes me think of You.

We Have Wine

John D. Groppe

It's the wine that shocks --not the brittle bread--
and reveals the Christ.

Golden in the cup, a sherry,
Syrup-like but sharp on the tongue.

The wine is grape, but not grape,
something unforeseen on the vine
except by the far foreseeing Father
and the maiden mother, who at Cana
said, "They have no wine."

We have wines--
sweet ambers, tart rosés, almost bitter reds--
that evoke our own transformation.

Disgust

Patrick Guyette

Bad Chinese food on a Friday night
Smells like rotting vegetables.
That could be dog you're eating
Instead of pork
On your fork.

Cockroaches may be hiding in the rice
Disguised in soy sauce.
And there is a hair in your egg roll
And slime in your egg drop soup.

Coach Cleo: The High School Gym Teacher

Patrick Guyette

Run, run, run and stretch

Run, run, run and stretch

Stubbed nose

Greasy stench

Sweaty pits

Whistle on lips

Short, smelly

Wrinkled head

Beady eyes

Dingy shoes

Worn tread

Crew cut

Bald head

Pudgy hands

Face red

Tired stance

Run 'em dead!

The Pose

Larisa Parrish

Her name is Natalie, and she's a professional model.
Her husband, Trent, is her photographer,
So she is always quite comfortable.
She is going to pose nude for a contest,
To get money for college.
She sits staring into the camera,
Hoping her body will win the contest.
Trent counts down to take the shot.
Her heart beats louder and louder.
"Ready, set, shoot," he says.
And she smiles like she never smiled before.

*The Dining Room of
30280 Osborne Road, Sunday,
January 27, 1997 at 2 pm*

Bob Spychalski

It's a lazy Sunday afternoon.
Adam, Andy, Joe, and I decide to play a game.
We set up the game on the smooth
dining room table.
Dice hitting the table sound like little drums.
The aroma of buttery, salty, popcorn fills the air.
Andy goes bankrupt to me.
Adam goes bankrupt to Joe.
Joe lands on Park Place
and pays me \$1700!!!
He rolls...snake eyes...
and I win!

Loneliness

Shanna Arnold

Like an old, stuffed animal
Sitting on the shelf, untouched,
Watching the little child
That once thought it was the greatest.
Watching him grow up and move on to a different life.

Cinabon

Matthew Eichas

CINABON CINABON CINABON

The line was long but
AMANDA AMANDA AMANDA

My mind was calling.

"Can I help you?"

"Sure, 153 Cinabons"

She laughed.

"Just kidding,

Only one"

She tossed one in a bag,

gave me a smile.

"Extra icing?"

"I gave 3."

"Thanks"

and walked away

AMANDA AMANDA AMANDA,

you blue-eyed

sandy blonde,

Apron all covered in flour--

I'll be back tomorrow.

Downers Grove

Matthew Eichas

Downers grove

2:00 a.m.

"Hey let's go to 4 corners"

"Ok, I'm in"

We cruised to Lemont road,

The main drag,

With no top or doors on the jeep,

Breeze whipping through.

BEEP BEEP

Bradley zips by in the Mercedes Coupe,

Gives a wave,

And the chase begins

North on Lemont Road

To 55

A quick toll

And we're off

With the pedal to the floor,

Side by side

Flying down

55.

*Kicking Back,
Seventh Row Center Screen
at Schererville
Showplace 16 on
Another Late Friday Night*

Don Shanahan

I like coming here.
It is my place of solace,
Where I go to get away from everything,
And be entertained by a great show.
Tonight is no different.
I'm in my usual spot,
The last row of big cushion seats,
Up front,
Below the aisles of stadium-style seating behind me.
These seats are the best,
My buddy and I,
Recline in the spring-backed seats
With the families and couples behind us,
We sit through the cheesy elevator music,
Waiting for the lights to dim,
And the movie to begin.
It's time to catch up on news with my friend.
A chance for me to talk about movies I enjoy.
More importantly,
It's a brief moment of heaven,
Every Friday night.

Picture Day

Breain Ma' Ayteh

The sunlight pouring through the window of his room was what finally caused Johnny to wake up. The five-year-old rubbed the sleep from his eyes and yawned before he hopped out of bed. He knew what today was.

"Picture day!"

Today, Johnny and 16 other little boys would be showing their pearly whites as they posed for the "First Annual Soldier Park Whiffle Ball League" team picture. Johnny loved whiffle ball and taking pictures. He couldn't wait to go.

Johnny walked into the kitchen and found his mother making breakfast. "Mmm, Momma, I love eggs!" he cried, smiling. She put a finger to her lips, then gave him a big hug.

"Poppa's sleepin' baby, let's not be noisy," she said. She looked fatigued, although her yellow sundress and carefully applied makeup suggested otherwise. "C'mon now and help Momma with breakfast."

"It's picture day, Momma," Johnny said as he put out the place mats, "I get to wear my uniform, and I get to hold the bat!"

"Ssh, Poppa's sleepin'. We'll go and get you dressed after we eat, and then we'll walk to the park." That seemed to make him happy.

Soon they sat down at the table, and all was silent except for the radio, which was turned to an all-talk station. Outside the kitchen window, a bird sang to the world. For a while things seemed peaceful. Johnny played with his eggs while his mother read the paper, rubbing her ankle every once in awhile.

Suddenly, there was a loud thump, and an angry voice yelled, "Dammit!" Johnny dropped his spoon.

Picture Day

...continued

"Pick it up, sweetie," she whispered, standing up. She ruffled his shaggy hair as she made a cup of coffee -- three creams and one sugar.

He staggered into the room, banging into the wall. She put on a smile and went to give him a kiss. "Morning, honey. I made you your coffee, just the way you like it."

Grabbing it from her hands, he took a gulp. "Too much cream," he muttered, and dumped it into the sink. "Cold, too. Make another pot."

"Okay, I'm sorry," she said quickly. Johnny watched her limp to the sink and pour the rest of the pot down the drain, the brown liquid cascading like a waterfall.

"How's the ankle?" he asked quietly.

"Fine," she said softly. "It doesn't hurt any more -- not really. I overreacted, just like you said."

"I thought so," he replied. "I didn't push you that hard." He winced and rubbed his temples. "Dammit, my head's throbbin'."

"You were out pretty late last night," she told him, putting coffee grounds in a brand new filter. "I waited for you until two."

"Shouldn't have bothered, I went out with Dick and Harry."

"Did you go to the casino?" she asked in a low tone.

"Eileen, if I wanted you to know where I was, I would tell you, am I right?"

She ignored his outburst and, when the new pot was well on its way, reached for an envelope labeled HOUSE MONEY. Looking inside, she went to finger the bills that she knew she had put there only two days before. This morning the envelope was empty.

...continued

Picture Day ...continued

"Tom," she said, and took a deep breath, "Where's the fifty-five dollars I had in here?"

"None of your business."

"Please, Tom? I have a right to know."

"Oh yeah? What bills do you pay in this house? Tell me the answer to that."

"I need twenty dollars," she told him, forcing herself to look him in the eye again.

"What the hell for?" he asked sharply.

"Johnny's picture day at the park. That's today, and the deposit is already past due."

"We know what he looks like. He doesn't need any damn pictures to remember, do you, boy?" Tom gave Johnny a hard smack on the back. The little boy bit his lip, and his eyes filled with tears, but he said nothing.

It was then that the young mother got angry. "You stole my house money to get drunk," she said boldly, tensely. "I needed that money. That's why it was there, not so you could wake up with a hangover!"

"Shut up," he sneered, and his hand came flying toward her, leaving a large red mark on her cheek. He raised his hand again and she flinched.

"Are you my mother?" She didn't answer. "Don't make me repeat myself," he warned, taking a step closer.

"No, I only -"

"I do NOT answer to you, understand? I don't answer to anybody! It's MY money, and I will do whatever the hell I want with it! Got it?" He banged his fist on the table for emphasis, almost hitting Johnny in the process.

"Watch what you're doing, you almost hit him!"

"He's MY kid, too! If I want to hit him, I will!"

With that said, Tom raised his hand and gave little

...continued

Picture Day

...continued

"Watch what you're doing, you almost hit him!"

"He's MY kid, too! If I want to hit him, I will!" With that said, Tom raised his hand and gave little Johnny a sharp blow to the head.

"Ow," Johnny whimpered and put his face in his hands.

"Ow? I'll give you 'ow'!" his father snarled and grabbed him by the collar. Eileen reached out to him. "Sit down Leenie and eat those eggs before I rip his arm off!"

She made her way to her seat, almost tripping in an effort to hasten her steps. Her lower lip quivering, she hastily shoved mouthfuls of egg through her lips.

Tom got up and kicked Johnny's chair until it tipped over. Johnny went crashing into the wall, and he hit the wall square in the face.

"Good God, Tom, he's only five!" she screamed, unable to hold back any longer, "Leave him alone!"

Johnny and his mother were the last ones to show up at the park. Johnny had a freshly pressed uniform, and Eileen had changed into a new sundress. The two walked slowly, hand in hand, and this time both were limping.

She joined the other mothers as all the boys were positioned for the picture. She apologized profusely. "Sorry we're so late, but Johnny was a bear to wake up...Would you believe it? I went tripping down the stairs on one of his toys... No that's not necessary, I'll just ice my ankle at home... Johnny? He was roughhousing with the boy next door and things went a little too far..."

"Ok, I'm all set!" announced the photographer.

...continued

Picture Day ...continued

"Hey, kid, with the bat, did your arm fall asleep? Hold it up a bit. Better. On the count of three. One, two"

"C'mon Johnny, smile!" his mother urged, wringing her hands. "Smile for Momma!"

"Three!"

With his black eye, swollen cheek, and bandaged wrist, Johnny smiled.

Precious Moments

Breain Ma' Aytch

In a hospital...

In a small, brightly lit room that had become home to the young couple during the past couple of hours, Matthew and Elizabeth held on to each other, the woman supporting her head on her husband's shoulder. "Please let her be OK," she whispered. "I'll die without my baby. I'll die." She broke into sobs.

Matthew rubbed her back and tried unsuccessfully to blink away tears.

They heard footsteps. Breaking apart, the two saw their daughters' doctor walking out of the operating room, slowly making his way towards them. He was holding his gloved hands apart, as if to offer them to God. The gloves were bloody. The doctor looked sad. He shook his head.

"No," Elizabeth choked.

"I'm sorry," said the doctor, and he truly meant it. "That truck just hit her too hard. We couldn't stop the bleeding. She passed on a few minutes ago."

Matthew felt his whole body convulse in horror. His

...continued

Precious Moments

...continued

wife started to retch. "Oh God!" she gasped, and doubled over as in pain. He just stood there, not knowing how to do anything but cry.

"She was four years old," he told the doctor brokenly, as if talking about the little girl would bring her back to life. "She was just learning how to ride a bike. We took her out yesterday for the first time. Only four -" The doctor wanted to reach out to them, but he remembered the gloves. He offered another feeble apology and walked back to the operating room, where the body of a four-year-old corpse was waiting for him.

In a grocery store...

The old man leaned on the armrest of his silver cart as he strolled down frozen foods aisle. Phillip's back was killing him. Two operations and he still couldn't walk straight. If Margaret were alive, she would scold him for his bad posture and unhealthy eating habits. "A home-cooked meal is the only kind of meal," she'd always said. But that was when Margaret was able to make him dinners that took three hours to prepare. That was before the cancer got her. Now, Phillip had to stock up on TV dinners that he could pop into the microwave. He didn't like them. He didn't like living alone, sitting in front of the television and watching "Wheel of Fortune" reruns. It made him very sad. He often would wake up and expect to find his wife lying beside him, even after seven months of sleeping alone. She was never there, and it always made him cry.

Phillip went home, walking slowly because of the bags and his back. After putting everything away, he stood back and admired his kitchen. It was a pretty kitchen, cabinets had teddy bear potholders hanging from the handle, and place mats of the same design were on the table. The

...continued

Precious Moments

...continued

refrigerator door was actually a collage of photographs, pictures of everything from their son's wedding day to their granddaughter's high school graduation. Phillip sat down at the table, and stayed in there, with his eyes closed, for an hour. He felt his wife's presence the strongest in this room.

The old man was tired and went to bed by 8:00. He had a bad dream. He dreamt that his son David grew an extra head and was making meatless spaghetti for breakfast in Phillip's kitchen, carelessly splattering the thick red sauce all over the teddy bear potholders. He begged David to stop, but he only laughed, and Vanna White popped out of the pot of sauce. She offered the old man five hundred dollars if he could solve the puzzle titled "What is Vanna wearing under that long black trenchcoat?"

It was a bad dream.

He woke up with a start, and was relieved to see the sun streaming through his window. Phillip sighed heavily and clutched his chest. "Oh, Marg, it was terrible," he heaved. "I thought I'd never wake up. Margaret, honey, I-" He reached over next to him, expecting a frail hand to grab onto his. But instead, he found an old pillow.

Phillip's face crumbled, and he started to cry.

In a playground...

Six-year-old Kenny pumped his legs wildly in the air as his swing seemed to fly through the trees. "I'm a bird, I'm a plane, I'm SUPERMAN!" He shouted with delight. He pictured himself in a billowing red cape and a huge letter "S" on his T-shirt, leaping from city to city, saving each one from death and destruction.

Would he get paid for that? He wondered.

The little boy brushed aside his thoughts and jumped out of the swing, falling into the woodchips that surrounded

...continued

Precious Moments

...continued

the blue and gold playground equipment. After shaking the chips and dirt out of his golden blond hair, Kenny looking around for his father. He spotted him sitting on a park bench. The kindly man looked up at his son and waved. Kenny waved back and ran to the sandbox. "Yay, I get it all to myself!" He said excitedly to no one in particular, and took great pleasure in rolling around in the minute grains of sand. When he was done, he looked for his dad again. He had gone to get a drink of water. Kenny was going to follow him when he saw another man coming towards him. He looked like a nice man. His body was big, like that guy from the Terminator movies, Kenny thought, and he had a long brown ponytail. He had a "Looney Toons" T-shirt on, and in his hand was a dog leash. He knelt down next to the boy.

"Excuse me," the man said gently, "but I lost my puppy. His name is Ralphie, and he's a real tiny dog. Have you seen him around here?"

"Nope, I'm just playin' in my sandbox. Dogs don't play in sandboxes," Kenny told him matter-of-factly, and the man smiled.

"Ralphie does," he answered, "and I'm scared he might've gotten hurt. Would you help me look for him? Please?" The man begged when the little boy hesitated. "I'm new here, and I don't know my way around. I might get lost just like Ralphie."

Kenny laughed. "Big people don't get lost!"

"Not if they have a friend to show them around," he said. "C'mon! I'll even buy you a toy when we're done. Any one you want."

"Really?" His eyes lit up.

"Sure! We'll be back before you know it!"

...continued

Precious Moments

...continued

"OK!" Kenny relented eagerly, and he gave a toothy grin to his new friend, who slowly smiled back. After stealing a glance to see if anyone was watching, he took little Kenny's hand into his own and led him to his mode of transportation: a beat up, used up dirty brown van with black garbage bags taped tightly over the vehicle's windows. "You're gonna love Ralphie," he told Kenny as he helped him into the back of the van. My doggie's going to be VERY happy when the two of us find him."

Kenny's father walked back into the playground five minutes later. He looked for his son by the sandbox and then by the swings, calling out his name.

"Kenny!" No response.

"Kenny?... Ken, where are ya, buddy? Dad's lookin' for you!" He was so busy searching and calling for his boy that he never even noticed when a brown van with masking tape windows drove quietly away.